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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 PORT AU PRINCE 000644

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STATE FOR WHA/EX AND WHA/CAR  
S/CRS  
INL FOR KEVIN BROWN AND ANGELIC YOUNG  
SOUTHCOM ALSO FOR POLAD  
STATE PASS AID FOR LAC/CAR  
INR/IAA  
WHA/EX PLEASE PASS USOAS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 05/02/2018  
TAGS: [KCRM](#) [PHUM](#) [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [SNAR](#) [SOCI](#) [HA](#)  
SUBJECT: HAITIAN NATIONAL POLICE RESPONSE TO RECENT CIVIL  
DISTURBANCES: WHAT WORKED, WHAT DIDN'T

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Classified By: Charge Thomas C. Tighe for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

11. (C) Summary: In the aftermath of civil unrest that led to looting and vandalism, the Haitian National Police (HNP) is looking at lessons learned and planning for future such events. The HNP response to the crisis in April revealed progress made in developing a professional police force but also highlighted unmet needs, particularly in terms of staffing, equipment and fuel, that significantly impacted the HNP's ability to effectively and quickly respond to emerging events. End summary.

12. (C) On April 3-9 Haiti suffered civil disturbances that began in Les Cayes in the south and spread to Port au Prince and cities in the central part of the country. The north remained relatively quiet throughout the period and an uneasy calm returned to the country starting April 10. In the aftermath of those events, which included violent demonstrations, vandalism and looting, the HNP has begun analyzing what worked and what didn't during that period. MINUSTAH is participating in that process as well as conducting internal deliberations related to their own response to events. The final statistical tally for the period in the capital area is:

- four deaths and a number of injuries, some from rubber bullets;
- 428 public and commercial buildings vandalized and looted
- 303 arrests
- 1 HNP officer and 15 MINUSTAH officers wounded
- an unspecified number of arms seizures, and
- one death of a MINUSTAH Nigerian police officer after the major disturbances ended which may or may not be connected to the riots, circumstances still under investigation.

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The Good...  
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13. (C) Several positive observations emerged from the HNP experience: the police continued to show up for work

throughout the period in spite of the risks and the difficulty in getting to the police stations; police showed great restraint, with HNP Director General Andresol specifically instructing the police to use non-lethal force and respect the rights of the demonstrators; and the DG publicly supported the right of the people to demonstrate peacefully, while warning them that violence would not be tolerated, a position that was publicly reiterated by MINUSTAH SRSG Annabi as well. Both President Preval and SRSG Annabi praised the HNP and MINUSTAH forces for their good work and cooperation.

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The Bad...  
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14. (C) The demonstrations began in Les Cayes where they quickly turned violent, with four deaths occurring in that area as well. Neither the response of the HNP nor MINUSTAH was sufficient to quell the violence quickly, which in turn may have encouraged demonstrators in other parts of the country to take to the streets later and to attack government and private facilities. Embassy sources in MINUSTAH during the Les Cayes events reported that some local HNP officers behaved in ways that made MINUSTAH suspect they were cooperating with drug trafficking and other criminal elements thought to be behind the violence there. In Port au Prince, the HNP appears to have been caught off guard when violence broke out April 7. They did not respond effectively to barricades and burning tires until at least April 8. Neither did they present much effective initial resistance to the vandalism, looting, and window-breaking rampage in the commercial district of Petionville. Among the facilities subsequently attacked on April 9 was the Killick Haitian Coast Guard base, which also houses the Sri Lankan Formed Police Unit in Port au Prince. That attack was repelled by

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the Sri Lankans firing over the heads of the crowd. More worrisome and now subject of intense scrutiny by the HNP and MINUSTAH alike is the attack on the National Palace on April 8, in which the crowd nearly breached a gate left unlocked before being forced back by Brazilian MINUSTAH troops. In response to the heightened violence, the HNP DG wanted to impose a curfew but was not authorized to do so. (Note: MINUSTAH source told poloff it rejected HNP,s curfew proposal for two reasons: UNPOL needed to remain focused solely on restoring security and not/not monitoring and supervising an overnight curfew; and UNPOL,s officers needed to rest at night after spending hours on the streets during the day, for the same reason. End note) Analysis of that incident is being held behind closed doors at the HNP by a select group that includes Bob Manuel, the President's law enforcement/drug advisor; the HNP DG; Secretary of State for Public Security Luc Eucher Joseph; and the Central Director of Police Administration (DCPA), Germain Destorel.

15. (C) It was also evident that the HNP, in spite of strides made in hiring and training new officers, is still understaffed nationwide. The HNP currently has fewer than 9000 officers based primarily in Port au Prince, with a projected need for at least 14,000 to police the entire country. Coverage in the provinces is even worse than in Port au Prince. Exacerbating that problem is a lack of equipment and resources for those officers on duty. The HNP reports that during the crisis they lacked sufficient body armor, shields and helmets, rubber bullets, and tear gas. During the events, NAS assisted the HNP, with the cooperation of MINUSTAH, in retrieving nearly 1000 canisters of tear gas from the USG-controlled bunker at the Police Academy to facilitate dispersing the disorderly crowds by non-lethal means. Other resources were in severely low supply, including fuel for HNP vehicles due to internal GOH planning deficiencies. When the HNP had just 200 gallons remaining, MINUSTAH stepped in and provided 2800 gallons of diesel fuel to allow the HNP to refuel vehicles during the nighttime

lulls, in priority order based on predicted need for the next day. The HNP was unable to obtain sufficient fuel as fuel vendors demanded payment at the time of delivery and the Ministry of Finance was unable to disburse funds. This is a chronic problem that the police face as fund distribution remains a difficult and time-consuming process. It also reflects tighter controls on HNP fuel purchase and distribution following evidence of corruption uncovered last year.

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and The Ugly...  
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16. (C) Rumors ran rampant during the demonstrations, including one that the HNP and MINUSTAH were not cooperating to the point that several HNP officers were fired upon by MINUSTAH. The rumor may have sprung from an incident in which some HNP officers were in the area of a crowd when MINUSTAH fired rubber bullets, causing some minor injuries. The rumor however was so persistent that SRSG Annabi publicly denied it at his press conference on April 17, praising the level of cooperation between the HNP and MINUSTAH.

17. (C) The business community is in general unhappy with the HNP response, saying that the HNP stood by and allowed their businesses be attacked and ransacked. Rumors abound that the HNP, many of whom are recruited from the lower and middle classes, stood by and let the people take out their frustrations on affluent Haitians. The business community's stance is in sharp contrast to their praise for DG Andersol's stepped-up efforts to address crime in the business district less than two months ago. The HNP response to violence in the Petionville commercial area is subject of internal HNP scrutiny. The DG has pledged that anyone found to have not fulfilled his/her duties will be held accountable. The HNP are also actively investigating the looting of several rice depots at the border at Malpasse. (Note: Given the limited

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numbers of police and equipment available, the HNP's response was predictable and some UNPOL advisors believe a more aggressive approach would have led to more casualties and greater damage if the crowds had reacted to perceived police excessive force. End note.)

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Next Steps  
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18. (C) As a result of lessons learned from these events, the HNP DG plans to restructure the role of the DCPA to streamline his duties in time of national crisis. Current DCPA Destorel is the oldest member of the HNP, a former FADH military officer and has overarching responsibilities in all security issues. He is so well-regarded by the DG that his request several times to retire has been denied. Once Destorel is gone, the new DCPA will need clearer guidance on how to manage such events. Issues of staffing and equipment are also being analyzed as the HNP determines how best to prepare for future events and reaches out to the international community for additional support. The HNP is carrying out this review as it keeps a wary eye on rumors of more demonstrations this week. (Note: Small violent demonstrations occurred in Les Cayes on April 28 but were quickly quelled. End note.) Overall, the HNP would like clearer, quicker guidance from the President or the Minister on how to proceed in such events. HNP ability and authority to respond quickly to public disorders are of the essence, and they were unable to do so in both Les Cayes and Port au Prince. In general, the HNP responded at first tepidly and cautiously, lacking explicit support and authorization from the President. Their caution has historical roots. Past actions to control rioting that produced casualties had led to the arrest and incarceration of the commanding officers

while the circumstances were investigated.

19. (C) The USG will continue to assist the HNP in meeting identified and emerging needs. The USG supports cadet classes of 650-750 officers annually and, working with the Canadians, is expanding the capacity of the Police Academy to allow for 1300 cadets to be trained annually beginning in summer 2008. NAS will also work with the HNP to determine the best use and storage for the non-lethal equipment the USG controls at the Police Academy. NAS is required to control and monitor that equipment and weapons purchased by the Interim Government of Haiti in 2005 under specific conditions imposed by Congress. By accelerating training and vetting of CIMO and UDMO riot units, it may be possible to make those items more readily available in time of crisis. However, supplying the greater operational needs and correcting the deficits of the HNP will require a GOH coordinated response across ministries.

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